

Work and Progress Together to Create a Reading Paradise for High Schools: Remarks of retrospection and prospects of “Senior High School Library Guidance Committee (SHSLGC)

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During 1990s, traditional senior high school education encountered challenges of social transitions, information explosion while entering a learning-oriented society. Educational reforms and policies were conducted and enforced nation-wide. School libraries was situated in a turning edge to cope with the education reforms. Two major projects have impacted heavily on the development of high school (including vocational high schools) librarianship. One was the subsidy for collection development from the Ministry of Education that enriched the high schools' library holdings, the other one was the establishment of “The Senior High School Library Guidance Committee (SHSLGC)”. SHSLGC consists of scholars of Library and Information Science Education, educational administrators, and selected high school library directors. The SHSGC Team started consulting jobs by selecting high school libraries as demonstrative models in different regions of the Island, conducting library symposiums, having published “The Handbook for Senior High School Libraries”, hosting forums for high school principals and chief librarians, establishing professional courses for chief librarians, and paying on-site visits to high school libraries around the Island. The on-site visits created inter-library cooperation and exchange of professional experiences among high schools and vocational high schools.

Efforts continued and when the “Library Law” was effected in year of 2002, SHSLGC gained its legal stands and became a regular organization to officially provide its services to senior school libraries. In addition to its original services

during the years, SHSLGC expanded its services to conduct researches on current-status of senior school libraries, posting e-Paper on the Internet, composing a high school e-learning data bank, helping high school libraries to delivery services to communities.

This paper addresses the development of SHSLGC, the history, milestones, the implementation, and its impact as well.

Foreword

Since 1994, there have been many talks about “the diversification-school-entrance scheme”, “the comprehensive senior high schools”, “the nine-year integrated curriculum” and “twelve-year national education”. This represents that the education in Taiwan are facing a radical shift. Pluralistic set of values have taken place of monolithic knowledge, such as emphases on both capability-orientation and creating diversiform learning environment. Libraries is a place that preserve, convey and to put in use the knowledge. In other words, an educational function lies in the library. School library is supposed to provide teachers with teaching materials, provide students with fundamental knowledge as well to help to develop students’ lifelong learning ability. Therefore, in terms of management, the library not only passively offer information to readers, but also actively pay attention to information collection, space arrangement, technical service as well as readers’ service. Over 10 years, the Senior High School Library Guidance Committee has not only offered many counsel and guidelines to senior high schools, but also offer much help to the development of high school libraries.

The Development of the senior high school library guidance can be divided into the following stages :

1. The Pioneer Stage (1989---1991)

In 1988, the Ministry of Education brought into force “the medium-term project of developing and improving senior high schools”, in which there was a scheme named “Improving the function of senior high school library”. The scheme is not only a beginning for senior high school library to operate through planning, budgeting and directing, but also a turning point for senior high school libraries to gain the support and assistance from educational government and university experts. In order to offer advice for school libraries, an guidance group, 10 university professors of library science

invited as commissioners. Model libraries were selected to help the other libraries in the management. Ministry of Education offers subsidy for school library automation.

II. The Developing Stage (1992 ~ 1999)

In 1992, “The Senior High School Library Guidance Committee” was established. The members of this organization were composed of three university professors, seven chief librarians and other government officers from The Ministry of Education. After brainstorming, they decided to continue the original business and promote a series of other consulting business. Three contact schools were chosen to be responsible for coordinating and serving. The committee held a meeting at the beginning of each semester to make plan for each year. In addition, the group held symposiums for different topic, they also do on-spot visits, help school library with making the most use of library and offering counseling service. In order to know more about how foreign senior school library run their business, The committee went to Australia and New Zealand to make a survey in 1999. The group visited 13 foreign senior high school libraries. This opportunity not only offers the group to learn more about how advanced country operate senior high school library, but also broaden the vision of the visitors.

III. A Transition Stage (1999~2003)

In 1999, the government had an internal re-engineering project. The Education Bureau of Taiwan Province was changed into the Central Office, Ministry of Education. “The Senior High School Library Guidance Committee” had minimized funds. Therefore, on-spot visit became the only left main task for the group. Owing to the effort and cultivation in previous years, most senior high school libraries are able to run efficiently. Hence, the group also included vocational schools and special schools as part of serving objects. The goals of on-spot visit lie in understanding library facility and operation, finding difficulties and problems, giving advices, helping with upgrading service quality of school library.

IV. Making a Fresh Start (2004 ~ till now)

On Jan. 17, 2001, the “Library Bill” was promulgated in Taiwan after legislation. According to the 16th item, the library guidance system finally has its foundation of law enforcement. The law stated that it is necessary to have advisory organizations for different type of library to offer guidelines and counseling service. Therefore, The Central Office, The Ministry of Education convened interrelated personage and revive

“The Senior High School Library Advisory Group” in June, 2004. This revived advisory group were composed of 18 university professors of Library Science as the guiding committees and 27 chief librarians as the instructors. The whole Taiwan is divided into nine districts. The following are the tasks for the “The Senior High School Library Advisory Group” during 2004~2005:

(1) Training Conference for Librarians ,(2) Publishing Library E-News,(3) Research on Current Status of Library,(4) Nationwide Reading & Short Essay Contest,(5)On-spot Visiting,(6) Setting up Digital Databank for Senior High School Teaching (7) International Interaction.

V. The achievements of “The Senior High School Library Guidance Committee”

Thanks to the efforts of the Senior High School Library Guidance Committee, there are some significant achievements contributed by the committee:

1. Library Operation

Because of the support and emphasis from the educational superintendent as well as the hard-working from both the librarians and SHSLGC, most libraries have reached certain scales in terms of library operation and management. Most libraries are in conformity with libraries regulations. Owing to the professional counseling of SHSLGC, the newly-constructed libraries are putting more and more emphases on the working circulation , ambient lighting , reading ambiance and modern equipment for the better exploitation of both teachers and students.

2. Model Libraries

In 1988, three senior high schools were chosen as model schools for example of running the library in 1988. A subsidy was granted from The Ministry of Education to buy books, facility and automation equipment. The example schools were also responsible for holding symposiums, setting up inter-library cooperation and offering counseling service to local library. Other 7 schools were chosen in 1990 as examples. 11 school were chosen in 1993 and 8 in 1995. Attribution to the ample funds and experts' help, these school libraries all have very good performances in terms of operation and management. In short, we could said that these schools have done very good demonstration in running a library.

3. The On-spot Visits

The on-spot visits were supposed to take place in 1999. Unfortunately, the catastrophic Earthquake on Sept. 21st put off the project until the year 2000. 60 schools in 2000, and 80 schools in 2001, then 70 schools in 2002 and finally 20 school in 2003 have been visited by the committee. The direct impact resulting from the on-spot visit is to offer the first-hand service to school libraries, exchange experience, improve space designing, improve working circulation and management. By the on-the-spot visits to each school, the group can personally observe and exchange ideas with the librarians. The librarians can always get the first-hand professional consulting service from the committee . This could be very helpful for the library arrangement, management and operation. During on-spot visit, some school would share their ideas or give some advice. The committee and instructor will write them down and make report of what they heard to the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education will respond immediately.

4. The Annual Conference

The annual conference for library directors and librarians held by the committee and education authorities has upgraded their capability and accomplishment. Many library science experts have been invited to make speeches. During the conference, poster exhibition and group workshop are very advantageous for librarians to improve their library operation in order to conform to the current trend.

5. School Libraries Interaction

By way of the organizations of the counseling team, it helps to establish a liaison net among senior high schools and vocational senior high schools in Taiwan. In addition, it also helps to set up the foundation of mutual-support as well as inter-library cooperation among the schools.

6. Annual Report

“The Senior High School Library Guidance Committee” prints out their fruitful results of their guiding. They make a detail report on on-spot visit, they share good ideas of managing school libraries, and finally they give out the printing to every senior high and vocational schools . Everyone can learn a lot from their fruitful results.

7. In-serve Training

In 1985, in order to improve the expertise of the chief librarians, “The Senior High School Library Advisory Committee” recommended open some courses in National Taiwan Normal University for the chief librarians to take. Thereafter, such courses are opened every year for chief librarians. Opening courses in the university for the librarians, allows the librarians improve their expertise, providing in-service training

for the chief librarians. By taking these courses and training, the librarians will upgrade their knowledge in library science and broaden their visions in operating libraries.

8. Promoting Reading activity in schools.

A series of reading clubs help the class to read as much as possible. Apart from this, The Ministry of Education also gives free books to the schools. This enhances the reading activity within senior high schools.

9. Publishing Senior High School Library Handbook

In 1991, under the guidance of experts in library science, the experienced chief librarians compiled a "Senior High School Library Handbook". This handbook served as an instruction for librarians. It also talked about technical service, reader's service and other library services. This handbook is revised in time and it's now the third edition.

10. Nationwide Essay Contest

In order to develop the students' essay writing ability, SHSLGC has organized a nationwide high school essay contest since 2001. The contest is held every semester. There have been a series of seminars held on campus to teach students the techniques of writing essays. Approximately, there are 20 thousand essays submitted for the contest

11. International Interaction

In 2003, Gerald Brown, the honorable ambassador of IASL, was invited to make a speech at the annual conference of senior high school librarians. In 2005, fourteen librarians' papers were accepted by the IASL Conference Committee in Hong Kong. A group of high school librarians participated in IASL Conference and established the relationship with the members from all over the world. The group visited the libraries in Singapore after the conference. In 2006, eleven librarians from Malaysia visited Taiwan and attended the seminar held by SHSLGC in Taipei and Nantou. They also visited some high school libraries. Sixteen high school librarians led by Professor Chao-chen Chen, went to Lisbon, Portugal, to attend the IASL 2006 Conference. 24 high school librarians of SHSLGC flew to Malaysia to hold a seminar with the librarians from Malaysia Chinese high schools. "The Handbook of High School Library for Malaysia Chinese High School" was completed during the seminar. The group visited some public and school libraries. Since 2003, to promote the international interaction is one of the importance job of SHSLGC. It not only enable the librarians to get access to the latest library information but also broaden the librarians' vision.

VI. The prospect of the SHSLGC

1. The Senior High School Library Guidance Committee integrates the human resources from university library, public library and senior high school library. It has its own organization and plan and conduct a direct counseling to the senior high schools. Ever since it was found, a lot of efforts have been made. This makes the school library gain its important position in school and becomes an important unit as student affairs and other school units.
2. The librarians are supposed to improve their expertise. SHSLGC keep the on-spot-visit duty to offer practical and doable advice. It is better to combine training courses along with book publishing in order to help the librarians to upgrade their knowledge and vision.
3. Setting up Library Architectural Consulting Committee to help with building a new library. With this committee, it can help with the loading-bearing capacity to meet the safety requirements.
4. Some school libraries do not have enough book collections. Thus they can not meet the requirements from both teacher and student. Some private schools do not have enough funds to purchase books. All these problems needed to be solved and help from the society.
5. Inter-library cooperation can complement the short collections of library. It's an information sharing society. If the school library can cooperate with university or public university libraries, it will provide students with a variety of resources.
6. To meet the current trend of life-long learning society, the school library should not only build up its features, but also should open to the community. Recruit residents to be volunteers to complement the short manpower problem. By doing so, school library can get a lot of social resource, too .

VII. Conclusion

To be able to cope with the life-long learning society and information technology age, our government has done a lot in educational reform to cultivate future talents to meet the requirement of global competition. Traditionally, in knowledge-orientation teaching model, teacher is the center. Nowadays in the talent-orientation teaching model, student is the center. Under this premise, how student make use of library to self-cultivate becomes an critical issue. This makes the position of a school library getting more and more important. The building, the collection and the human resources all have direct impact on the function of a library. The setting up of

the Senior High School Library Advisory Group indeed has a great contribution to upgrade the function of a school library.

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